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President:	Mr. Sangqu/Mr. Kumalo	(South Africa)
	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Ms. Song Danhui
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Mutavdžić
	France	Mr. Badirou-Gafari
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Troya Aguirre
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Etherington
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha

Agenda

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258)

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08-32416 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Colombia and the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers, as indicated this morning, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Netherlands, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for providing my delegation with the opportunity to participate in this open debate. The recent developments regarding possible arms shipments to Zimbabwe have shown once again how topical this issue is, both in the context of the General Assembly and for the Security Council.

Building on the statement made this morning by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, I would like to emphasize that we agree with the Secretary-General's analysis of the current state of affairs regarding the issue of small arms. The Netherlands fully supports the recommendations made in his report (S/2008/258), and we are pleased and encouraged by his fresh approach to this important topic. In particular, my delegation welcomes the broad approach to the issue, the connection to capacity-building and development, the focus on improving cooperation between national law enforcement authorities and the inclusion of issues such as ammunition flows and poor end-use verification.

The problems arising from small arms proliferation are still plentiful. We need to continue striving for full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We are confident that the upcoming Biennial Meeting of States will propel and steer action on international cooperation, marking and tracing, stockpile management and surplus disposal, and illicit brokering.

The recommendations made by last year's United Nations expert group on illicit brokering, which was chaired by my fellow countryman Mr. Prins — who is sitting next to me — deserve follow-up, while our ambitions for a legal instrument should not be abandoned. And we need to weigh and reweigh our methods of curbing the proliferation of small arms in the light of the knowledge we have gained.

In recent years, the international community has become more aware of the connection between armed violence and development. It is increasingly understood that the problems arising from small arms need to be addressed not as a separate technical issue, but as an issue that is embedded within a broader development approach. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) is a confirmation, at the highest level, of the new consensus that security and development are intimately linked.

Armed violence has a major impact on the often vulnerable countries that suffer from it, as it affects economies, health sectors, budding democracies and, in general, the fabric of society. To deal with small arms and light weapons effectively is to recognize the myriad ways in which armed violence affects society and to act on it accordingly. If the international community is serious about achieving the Millennium Development Goals — which I believe it is — we need to start looking beyond the efforts directly aimed at achieving those goals and realize that armed violence will thwart any substantial improvement in levels of development.

The Secretary-General recommended that we develop key indicators for the area of small arms and use those to determine a set of measurable goals. In that respect, the efforts in the framework of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development are

mentioned as being encouraging. The signatories to the Declaration, which come from all regional groups, have started to work on measurability in the field of armed violence and are currently reflecting on the possibility of developing so-called security for development goals. Those goals could be complementary to the Millennium Development Goals and, as such, bridge the gap between security and development.

It is our hope that the understanding of the correlation between armed violence and development will become firmly rooted both in United Nations standards and in international action on small arms proliferation.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Congo.

Mr. Okio (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is a true pleasure for my delegation and me to see you, Sir, presiding at the close of your presidency of the Security Council over this meeting on a subject that is of great importance to us: small arms. Allow me also to point out that, under your presidency, the most important questions affecting our continent have been considered by the Council and Member States. Congo thanks you for that and offers its sincere gratitude to your delegation.

Most present-day conflicts, as the Secretary-General says so well in his report, contained in document S/2008/258, are fought primarily with small arms and light weapons. Africa, the largest dumping ground for such weapons and host to the greatest number of armed conflicts, is without doubt the continent that most suffers the damaging consequences of that scourge.

Hence, this meeting, taking place a few weeks before the third Biennial Meeting to review the 2001 Programme of Action, is most timely. It offers Member States and this organ, primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, an excellent opportunity to consider appropriate solutions to the threat represented by such weapons in certain parts of the world.

I should like to paraphrase a great French statesman, President Jacques Chirac, as he spoke of another, equally important challenge at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, to the effect that, so long as the threat of small arms and light weapons remains both pressing and ongoing, the world must not look away. A sense of realism demands it of us.

As we all know, the primary role in the struggle against the illicit trade in those weapons belongs to Member States. It is also clear, however, that in addressing that and other challenges, partnerships are equally necessary, particularly when complemented by the coherent action of the United Nations.

My delegation welcomes the many initiatives that have been taken at various levels, including the meetings of experts organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and other regional and subregional meetings. We also note with pleasure the decision taken by the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), our own subregional organization, at the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Sao Tome and Principe in May 2007, to draw up a legal instrument to monitor small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and a code of conduct for defence and security forces. Congo takes this opportunity to appeal to our ECCAS partners to support such projects.

Congo recalls here that the Security Council should, as it has with respect to other issues on its agenda, demonstrate both its determination and its unity by taking active measures to fight the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which has incalculable consequences for our peoples. Indeed, the introductory words of Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the Secretary-General's report, are sufficiently eloquent concerning its physical, human, material and other consequences. It is therefore unnecessary for me to revisit the harmful effects of the use of those weapons in many countries in conflict.

In the light of all that I have just said, and with respect to our rightful objectives concerning the threat to international peace and security posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, my delegation should like to make the following comments.

First, the question of small arms and light weapons should be addressed in parallel with that of ammunition in the context of the drafting of a binding legal instrument, which we strongly advocate. Indeed,

the Secretary-General's report notes that "[m]ore than 80 per cent of ammunition trade seems to remain outside of reliable export data" (*S/2008/258, para. 19*). And yet, ammunition is essential to the functioning of those weapons. There is thus a need for joint and well-coordinated action on the part of the international community to monitor the circulation of ammunition and improved stockpile management.

Secondly, the question of the responsibility of the manufacturers of such weapons must be raised with respect to export, transfer, licensing, marking and tracing. Indeed, without the participation of manufacturers and the assistance of the States where they operate, no action by the international community can have the desired results, given the complexity of the present-day structure of the arms trade and the existence of numerous brokers and points of sale.

Thirdly, the issue of respect for embargoes should enjoy greater attention because it has been relentlessly demonstrated that the perpetuation of some conflicts is linked to the ease with which certain illegal armed groups obtain weapons. Respect for embargoes is all the more essential in that it allows us to reduce, to a certain extent, the capacity for harm of illegal groups and to prevent the emergence or resurgence of certain conflicts.

The Secretary-General's 13 recommendations could represent an equal number of steps forward if they were converted into consensual decisions, despite the fact that they do not all go as far as we should have wished, as the representative of the United States pointed out this morning in referring to certification. While we recognize the impact of this debate, we regret that the Security Council has been unable to make a far-reaching decision commensurate with the expectations of peoples throughout the world who are suffering the plague of war.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland.

It is a well-known fact that small arms and light weapons maim and kill hundreds of thousands of people every year, create fear and insecurity, divert resources needed elsewhere and hinder post-conflict recovery. Security is a precondition for development, and the interlinkages among security issues, humanitarian problems and development are increasingly recognized. Combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is therefore fundamental to improving global, regional and national security and necessary social and economic development.

Let me reiterate that the five Nordic countries fully support the efforts to deal with the challenges posed by man-portable air defence systems.

The United Nations Programme of Action of 2001 remains the global framework for cooperative efforts to combat illicit arms. The five Nordic countries firmly support the full implementation of the commitments set out in the Programme of Action.

In doing so, we call for enhanced partnerships with all relevant stakeholders. We call for enhanced cooperation among Governments. All relevant parts of the United Nations family must contribute. In this respect, let me reiterate the importance of the Security Council. It is vital for the Council to address the challenges posed by small arms and light weapons in relation to human security. In this respect, we must fully recognize the gender implications of this threat. Likewise, we believe that the Peacebuilding Commission must take fully into account the complexities in carrying out its task. We cannot achieve progress unless we engage regional institutions. We must further strengthen the partnership with civil society.

The five Nordic countries intend to continue contributing in this joint undertaking. We are ready to provide financial resources, as we have done in recent years. Within the framework of the Nordic-African ministerial meeting, we have met with African colleagues both in Geneva and in New York to discuss specific issues relating to the illicit trade and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their negative impact on development in Africa.

We cannot allow the third Biennial Meeting of States under the Programme of Action to fail, as was the case with the 2006 Review Conference. We must aim for a successful third Biennial Meeting that brings the Member States together around the priority issues identified by the Chair-designate and that makes recommendations on improved implementation of the Programme of Action. This will be crucial in order to strengthen international efforts on small arms and light

weapons. A successful third Biennial Meeting will pave the way for more ambitious and more effective global work to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the coming years.

First, we must take stock of where we stand on the implementation of the 2005 Instrument on marking and tracing. Most of us would have preferred a legally binding instrument. Yet, now the challenge is to ensure that all countries adhere to this politically binding Instrument.

Secondly, the Nordic countries have for years called for more effective international cooperation in addressing the question of brokering in small arms and light weapons. We have advocated an international instrument against illicit brokering. Yet, we note that the recent United Nations Group of Governmental Experts has drawn other conclusions. Our challenge is now to identify practical measures which will make a difference in our common efforts to fight illicit brokering. The recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts should form the basis of this discussion during the third Biennial Meeting.

Thirdly, the upcoming third Biennial Meeting, to be held in New York, should also consider national implementation of the Programme of Action. It is therefore vital that all Member States submit their national reports in a timely manner.

Fourthly, we consider civil society, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia, to be important partners, both in shaping policy and in implementation. We support enhanced NGO participation in meetings under the Programme of Action, and not least at the upcoming third Biennial Meeting of States.

While the Programme of Action is valuable, we need a legally binding treaty to regulate the arms trade. We look forward to the outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts which has been established to clarify the modalities for an arms trade treaty.

Last year, all the five Nordic countries articulated their views on such a treaty to the Secretariat. From our perspective, an arms trade treaty is feasible, doable and desirable. We are convinced that such as treaty could facilitate the task for the Security Council. We are also of the view that an arms trade treaty should properly capture key dimensions such as human rights, and development and should contribute to a broader humanitarian agenda.

Illicit small arms and light weapons represent a threat to human security, peacebuilding efforts and development. We must forge an even stronger global partnership to combat this menace. The United Nations must be in the lead, but regional institutions play a vital role in our broader international efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, and South Africa for convening this meeting. Canada appreciates the opportunity to participate in this important and timely debate on small arms. I would also like to thank Ms. Hoppe for her briefing.

We welcome the excellent report put forward by the Secretary-General (S/2008/258), and, in particular, its emphasis on the harmful impact of illicit small arms on security, human rights and social and economic development. The recommendations in the report serve as a useful guideline to encourage further action to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

Measures to address the impact of illicit small arms must be considered as part of the broader context of promoting international peace and security, including peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives. Increased interaction among the various bodies involved in these issues, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission, would allow for creative approaches to the small arms issue from a broader perspective. The Secretary-General's report provides useful recommendations on ways to enhance the synergies among those bodies.

Canada applauds the Security Council's work in addressing critical issues such as small arms through targeted sanctions, an important and effective tool of the Security Council. Targeted sanctions have been used to embargo arms sales to conflict zones and to prevent certain armed groups from trading in high-value natural resources, such as diamonds and timber, which can provide the means to finance arms purchases and other conflict-related activities.

We have long sought to improve the effectiveness of sanctions while reducing their humanitarian impact, including during our most recent term on the Security

Council, and have supported a number of studies and other initiatives to that end. Canada is currently working closely with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs to develop an information management system for use by panels of experts monitoring sanctions.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations on possible measures to improve the monitoring of arms embargoes currently mandated by the Security Council and to strengthen practical cooperation between relevant sanctions monitoring groups, peacekeeping missions and Member States. Canada supports the inclusion of United Nations arms embargoes monitoring functions in the mandate of United Nations peacekeeping missions and the recommendation in the Secretary General's report that this task be given to a dedicated unit equipped with the capacity to carry it out comprehensively.

The management of existing stockpiles and the destruction of surplus arms and ammunition must also be a priority for States and the larger international community in order to prevent their diversion for illicit use. Canada has already assisted a number of countries in destroying surplus arms and ammunition. Through the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, we are also assisting Afghanistan in rendering ammunition stockpiles more secure and improving stockpile management practices.

In order to combat illicit flows of small arms, we must continue to strengthen the global regulatory framework governing small arms transfers.

(*spoke in French*)

In this regard, Canada was heartened by the strong support among Member States for the General Assembly resolution calling for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument, establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, including small arms. We look forward to the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility, scope and parameters of an arms trade treaty.

As stated at the Small Arms Review Conference held in New York in 2006, Canada maintains that strengthening the global framework governing small arms transfers in order to combat illicit flow of small arms and light weapons should not impair the legitimate interests of owners, manufacturers and vendors of legal firearms.

Implementation of regional instruments must also be strengthened in order to stem the illicit flows of small arms, which are frequently traded from one conflict to another in unstable regions. Canada has contributed to a number of initiatives to examine, promote and strengthen the implementation of small arms instruments at the regional and subregional level, especially in Africa and the Americas.

The adoption in 2001 of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was a major achievement. Ensuring its full implementation will remain a challenge for years to come. The upcoming biennial meeting of States provides an opportunity to take stock of progress in implementing the Programme of Action and to look at challenges that remain. Canada is working with other States, international and regional organizations and civil society to demonstrate that such meetings can be effective and useful to accelerate global action on this critically important issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for holding this thematic debate, the Secretary-General for his report on small arms and light weapons and particularly Ms. Hoppe for presenting the report.

The United Nations plays a fundamental role when it comes to disarmament and the prevention of conflict. There can be no doubt that we need to strengthen its action in this area, and to improve its internal coordination in order for it to have a greater impact in its work.

My delegation considers that it is a matter of urgency to bring about greater cooperation between the various organs of the United Nations, bearing in mind that the General Assembly is the deliberative forum and that it is the only body that can provide a normative framework to guide the decisions of all States with regard to the subject we are discussing today.

In this respect, my delegation would like to highlight the importance of referring in this debate to the negative effect that illicit small arms have on

security, particularly in countries experiencing a crisis or in a post-conflict situation, and of stressing the work done by the Security Council in these cases.

The efforts undertaken by States and the international community in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals are a matter of priority in order to help reduce sources of tension in countries which are most vulnerable to conflicts. It is for this reason that we reaffirm our belief that in countries in conflict or post-conflict situations we must provide a minimum set of living conditions for the population. Likewise, we also feel it necessary that these efforts be supported by decisive and robust action in order to deal with those that benefit directly from the industry of war and facilitate arms trafficking. However, having said this, we must be clear with regard to the direct link that we wish to attribute to underdevelopment and armed conflict, for, while violence can be exacerbated by poverty, in no circumstances can it be said to be caused by poverty. Urban violence in certain sectors of developing countries does not obey the various norms of social, political and economic inequality and is not related directly to poverty. Instead, it stems from external factors, such as drug trafficking and other transnational crimes. Furthermore, we have seen how the use and abuse of small arms and light weapons in developed countries has led to the loss of innocent lives on a daily basis and caused public massacres.

My delegation takes note of the recommendations provided by the Secretary-General in his report, and we are heartened to learn of the initiatives approved by the Security Council and its sanctions monitoring groups in the work with post-conflict States. We hope that in the future, design and vigilance will be optimized and that the recent progress in disarmament practice, demobilization and reintegration and the security sector reform will continue. In this respect, we must stress that these initiatives should be confined to the current specific cases and should not become general practice or be included as a matter of course in the work of the rest of the United Nations system.

My delegation agrees with the urgency of strengthening practical measures to combat the trafficking in small arms and light weapons and to give the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument the necessary support and the teeth to be successful in achieving its objectives. We are sure that this process will end in the consideration of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on small arms and light weapons, leading to cooperation between States in the implementation of this legislation.

For Ecuador, this is particularly important, because over the past few years we have experienced the effects of an armed conflict beyond our borders, which has brought in its wake a huge demand for refuge in our country and much immigration. For this reason, my delegation attaches importance to the multilateral discussion of small arms and light weapons and views with concern the proliferation of these kinds of weapons, given their links to violence, terrorism and social disintegration.

In this context, Ecuador is meeting its international obligations, particularly with regard to the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, via the national arms control computer system designed by Ecuadorian military engineers. Moreover, as a demonstration of its commitment to the small arms biennial meeting next July, Ecuador will present its report under General Assembly resolution 62/45, adopted in December 2007.

Finally, allow me to reiterate the importance of working together and being able to continue to rely on international cooperation to achieve our disarmament objectives. The national efforts of developing countries in this area can only be successful if the international community continues to provide its support.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Firstly, Mr. President, we would like to thank you for holding this debate on small arms and light weapons. It is a matter of extreme importance for Latin America, as was just said by my colleague from Ecuador. Small arms and light weapons do not themselves cause the conflicts in which they are used, but the ease with which they are obtained and their excessive accumulation tend to worsen those conflicts. Their use claims large numbers of victims, prolongs conflicts and increases the feeling of insecurity among the populations suffering from this scourge. Because they are easy to transport and conceal, they are difficult to control.

Chile has been concerned with controlling small arms and light weapons as well as their ammunition, explosives and related elements. States are the actors that bear the primary responsibility for providing security to populations, which they must do in compliance with the rule of law. In accordance with the guiding principles of human security, Chile assigns to the State the role of protecting fundamental freedoms, which are the essence of life.

My delegation agrees with and supports the agreements and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly with regard to conventional weapons, particularly those related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My country attaches particular importance to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which provides a good basis for States to incorporate some of its provisions into their national norms. In addition, we look forward with interest to the commencement of negotiations on instruments for tracing illicit small arms, as suggested in the Programme of Action. We believe that to be highly important.

It is also important that States adopt the Programme and that they be able to incorporate into their national legislation all the aspects it covers, in keeping with their national capacities. The international assistance and cooperation provided to States can be an important incentive in the implementation of this and other international instruments.

We are prepared to participate in the third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in New York in July, and in the activities that will be carried out in our region to prepare for that event, such as the preparatory meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Bogotá, Colombia, on 17 and 18 June.

My country agrees that the problems related to small arms and light weapons as a source of conflict should be addressed in the Security Council, which is the organ that has responsibility for the arms embargoes and sanctions that it applies to achieve the stabilization of regions in post-conflict situations. If embargoes are to have real impact, the Council must carry out effective monitoring together with the affected State, respecting its national capacities and helping it to develop that capacity if the State does not possess it or has lost it as a result of the conflict. There must also be effective exchange of information among the various actors participating in the control regime, including national authorities and peacekeeping missions as well as international and regional organizations.

The Peacebuilding Commission has an important function in this area. The Commission can play an important role by creating the necessary synergies among United Nations organs so that the countries under consideration in its country-specific configurations can consider including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the Assembly, as well as the related international instruments, as effective tools for peacebuilding in societies emerging from conflict.

The conclusions reached by the Secretary-General in his report on small arms (S/2008/258) are appropriate for the existing international situation and challenge us to continue the efforts to reduce the worldwide circulation of these weapons and to control their illicit trafficking. Chile would like to see the establishment of global and regional norms and agreements prohibiting transfers of weapons and ammunition that cause or spread armed conflicts or that worsen existing ones. Adequate international control, based on an integrated and broad strategy that responds to the challenges posed by the excessive circulation of small arms and light weapons and their illicit trafficking, would undoubtedly contribute to the prevention of threats to international peace and security, to respect for the norms of international humanitarian law and, finally, to the enjoyment of human rights.

The President: Before I call on the next speaker, I should like to remind delegations once again to limit their statements to no more than five minutes. The list of speakers has grown, and we want to give everyone a hearing on this matter.

I now call on the representative of Austria.

Mr. Ebner (Austria): Austria fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would therefore like to make just the following brief comments.

The availability of and the easy access to small arms and light weapons have terrible consequences, such as crime, terrorism, the destabilization of State structures and societies and national and international conflict. We encounter human rights violations, as well as long-term displacement and poverty. Small arms contribute to undermining the attempts of millions of people to enjoy development opportunities in peace and security.

Together with its EU partners and individually, Austria strives to support the fight against the illicit accumulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Despite a lack of tangible progress in global efforts against illicit small arms and light weapons in recent years, there have been significant advances at the regional level. We have therefore focused our support on these regional initiatives.

In Africa — the continent most affected by the uncontrolled spread of small arms — Austria supports the strengthening of national and regional legal regimes and capacity-building, as well as practical disarmament measures. We provide funding, totalling more than half a million euros, to a number of critical projects implemented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. One such project seeks to curb the illicit brokering of small arms, through the establishment of a regional register of authorized arms dealers in the States that participate in the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa. Another project envisages the establishment of a new legal instrument to control the trafficking of small arms and light weapons among Central African States. Yet another project is aimed at supporting the implementation of the Convention on Small Arms of the Economic Community of West African States. Austria has made a long-term commitment to those multi-year projects.

In the Asian and Pacific region, Austria focuses its support on capacity-building as well as on strengthening the rule of law by supporting a project to curb the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons. That project will be implemented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, in Kathmandu, Nepal.

In our immediate neighbourhood of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Austria supports the destruction of stockpiles and ammunition, in line with the recommendation, made by the Secretary-General in his recent report (S/2008/258), that the destruction of surplus ammunition stockpiles be made a priority.

We view our financial support for all of these projects as concrete contributions that assist States in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his recent report.

Before concluding, let me briefly mention the valuable contribution of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Its contributions to standard-setting are well recognized and comprise, inter alia, a landmark document: the Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Besides norm-setting, the OSCE places priority on assistance to affected States and on weapons destruction.

Austria supports continued attention by the Security Council to the overarching problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, we look forward to the third Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, to be held in July. We welcome the determination that exists at the regional level to move forward in the fight against small arms and light weapons. At the same time, the continuation of a small arms and light weapons process at the global level remains indispensable. After all, in our interconnected world, the human security of all of us depends on it.

The President: I now call on the representative of Peru.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to commend you, Sir, on the last day of your second presidency of the Security Council. I welcome your initiative to convene this open debate of the Security Council on small arms, a matter of great importance to the international community.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his valuable report.

In addressing the serious problem of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, we must consider the issue comprehensively, taking supply and demand into account. From that dual perspective, the adoption in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, was a most positive measure. In conjunction with the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and

Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, it represents substantial progress in our approach to the subject.

However, we would have wished the Instrument to be legally binding, include the aspect of ammunition, set out specific goals and facilitate assistance and cooperation among States. We hope that the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts will soon spark negotiations on a legally binding international treaty on small arms and light weapons.

The dimensions of the problem are reflected in the assessment that more than 875 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation. It is worrisome to note that this category of weapons is subject to the fewest registers because most are in private hands. When we match such data with the increase of violence in conflict zones, armed crime, the activities of insurgent groups that challenge legitimate democracies, and other phenomena that claim countless victims and foment social and political instability, it is clear that we need coordinated international measures to exercise greater control over the illicit trade in and circulation of small arms and light weapons.

No threat arising from weapons of mass destruction should allow us to neglect the fact that small arms and light weapons cause thousands of deaths every day throughout the world and are wielded against peace, security and human rights in myriad forms. Stopping or reducing that illicit trade is therefore not just a moral imperative that cannot be shirked by the manufacturing States and to which all States must contribute. Above all, it is a shared responsibility deriving from the United Nations Charter itself, whereby we have undertaken to maintain peace and security and to take effective collective measures to prevent and eliminate all threats. That will be possible only if we proceed to adopt a series of common and mandatory measures.

I should like to reiterate that small arms and light weapons constitute the only category of arms that is not under the exclusive control of States. Their manufacture, trade and use are also in private hands. However, the primary responsibility for controlling the flow of arms lies with States, be they manufacturers, exporters, re-exporters, importers or transit points. In that respect, the Secretary-General has proposed some measures that we endorse and which should be given due attention by States as soon as possible. In particular, we must work to standardize end-user certification, reduce the excessive accumulation of ammunition, and develop assistance and cooperation to enhance States' capacities to halt the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and ammunition.

Such measures should complement the work of the Security Council in monitoring arms embargoes; strengthening synergies between embargoes and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; and developing practical measures for cooperation between the sanctions monitoring groups of the Security Council, peacekeeping missions, Member States and their investigating authorities, and the relevant regional and international organizations.

Finally, we believe it important that the Security Council has decided to address the serious problem of small arms and light weapons on a biennial basis as of this year.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): The Philippines commends the presidency of the Security Council for organizing this debate on the important and urgent need to address the problem of the proliferation and illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

Among the many types of armaments that are available in today's global arms market, small arms and light weapons, although not the most lethal and destructive, because of the prevalence and openness of their use throughout the world have killed and maimed and struck fear into millions of people and will continue to do so unless controlled. Those killings have brought untold fear, suffering and misery to the affected families and loved ones, as well as relatives and friends.

Worse yet, so many small arms and light weapons have been produced — and there seems to be no limit or end to such production — by and/or in different countries throughout the years. Since those weapons can easily be transported and are less expensive, they are bound to proliferate, especially since they can be used in times of both peace and conflict, for good or bad.

The Philippines recognizes the fear, suffering, misery and pain brought upon innocent peoples by small arms and light weapons. The harm they have brought to entire populations is immeasurable. The

Philippines believes that it is imperative for all States Members of the United Nations to account for their stockpiles of small arms and light weapons and to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of irresponsible persons, such as criminals, or groups, such as terrorists, that espouse a culture of death or cause the aggravation of conflicts for the ascendancy of their anti-social ends or causes.

Thus, the Philippines has complied with General Assembly resolution 62/47 on the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Philippines considers the marking of firearms with a unique identifier to be an essential element in preventing their illegal transfer. All firearm manufacturers in my country are required to mark their products. Government authorities, such as the Philippine National Police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and others, only use small arms and light weapons that are properly marked.

By legislation through Presidential Decree 1866, as amended by Republic Act 8294, the Philippines requires licensed manufacturers of small arms and light weapons to apply an appropriate and reliable marking system on each weapon as an integral part of the production process. The Philippines maintains comprehensive records on the manufacture and distribution of small arms and light weapons. The Firearms and Explosives Division of the Philippine National Police meticulously records all data on confiscated, captured, surrendered and deposited small arms and light weapons. That agency has upgraded its firearm management information system, which allows for the identification and verification of the routes and destinations of small arms and light weapons.

On the other hand, the Philippines has thrown its full might against illegal arms manufacturers in the country, both through tighter laws that impose heavy imprisonment penalties even for the manufacture of parts only, and through new regulations and stricter administrative procedures.

The Philippines has made progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It maintains appropriate partnerships with the local firearms industry, private security providers, gun clubs and civil society. The country has several laws to prevent the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, such as Republic Act 8294, which codifies the laws on the illegal and unlawful possession, manufacture, dealership, acquisition or disposition of firearms, ammunition or explosives. Based on our national legislation, the term "firearms" is used in an even stricter sense than the definition in the Programme of Action. Also pending in the Philippine Senate are SB No. 1615, entitled "Act to Prohibit Certain Firearms Especially Useful to Terrorists", and SB No. 837, entitled "An Act Defining the Crime of Firearms Smuggling, Providing Penalties Therefor and for Other Purposes", among others.

The Philippines observed Small Arms Destruction Day in July 2007 by destroying thousands of confiscated or surrendered firearms. It is reported that over 50,000 more captured small arms and light weapons are scheduled to be destroyed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines at its supply units.

The Philippines submits that full and unrelenting cooperation with the United Nations system on the issue under consideration is of paramount importance. Hence, in addition to what I have just stated, the Philippines is undertaking appropriate measures to prevent exports of small arms and light weapons that would violate sanctions issued by the United Nations or contravene bilateral, regional or multilateral commitments on the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It shares information on illicit transfers with like-minded States through international instruments, such as the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures. On the export and import of small arms and light weapons, the Philippines ensures that there is control over the use of end-user certificates or letters of intent. The Philippines also does not re-export or retransfer previously imported small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, the Philippines will always be prepared and ready to contribute to and join the global fight against illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons so as to save lives and reduce the human misery and suffering caused by those weapons. International cooperation and sharing of information are key factors if we are to effectively combat and

eliminate that international problem. A nation acting alone, without the cooperation, assistance and support of others, particularly those with large stockpiles of small arms and light weapons, would be helpless; its efforts would be futile. All nations must work together and remain in concord and solidarity to achieve decisive, positive results in solving the problem. The time to do so cannot be delayed a moment longer.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for having convened this open debate on small arms.

Switzerland welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and the recommendations contained therein. We appreciate the holistic approach of the report and agree with its analysis, in particular on the impact of armed violence on human security, human rights and social and economic development.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is key. Switzerland will continue to support its full and comprehensive implementation. The upcoming Biennial Meeting of States will give us the opportunity to review the achieved results and to further enhance our implementation efforts. In that context, particular attention should be given to the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Despite the efforts undertaken to date, the problem of the illicit trade in light weapons remains acute. We need to continue to act in light of experience on the ground.

In recent years, intensive research has been undertaken into the links between security and development. The findings confirm, as the Secretary-General's report notes, that armed violence represents a major constraint to achieving the Millennium Development Goals because it diverts means and resources.

Convinced of the importance of addressing the problems arising from armed violence in a broader development approach, Switzerland, together with other like-minded countries, launched in June 2006 the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Open to all States, the initiative has already been endorsed by more than 70 countries, which have committed themselves to achieving measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence, as well as tangible improvements in human security, by 2015. In view of today's debate, the Geneva Declaration, as well as a short briefing note, were distributed in advance to all Member States.

Switzerland is pleased to note that the Secretary-General recommends in his report the identification of key indicators for the area of small arms. Such indicators should serve as a basis for setting the measurable goals needed to achieve progress in the fight against the scourge of armed violence. In particular, we share the Secretary-General's view that developing measurable goals on armed violence towards 2015 will offer the opportunity to integrate security-related themes in the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals.

In that respect, I would like to mention that the core group of States promoting the implementation of the Geneva Declaration — which is coordinated by Switzerland — is developing a measurability methodology in the field of armed violence. The core group has also initiated discussions in view of developing security for development goals. We hope that this work will support the United Nations efforts.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to convey our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Security Council's open debate on small arms.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document S/2008/258 of 17 April 2008. The report highlights various aspects of the issue of small arms, with emphasis on the negative impact that illicit small arms continue to have on security, human rights and socio-economic development, in particular in areas of crisis and in post-conflict situations. The issues raised remain a major challenge to the international community and require multidimensional responses.

The complexity of the issue of small arms challenges the mandate of the United Nations. Nigeria would therefore continue to support the collective action of Member States to advance the achievements

made since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. However, if the Programme of Action is to be successfully implemented, there is a need to integrate national, subregional and regional strategies to complement the international dimension of the problem. In addition, collaborative efforts between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission in integrating a framework related to the issue of small arms and light weapons should be devised.

Nigeria remains convinced that the best and most effective strategy for achieving our goals is through the elaboration of a legally binding global instrument to stem the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms, including the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We further believe in the development and implementation of other international instruments, such as the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons; and instruments on trade, brokering and end use. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and Security Council embargoes should also be included.

Furthermore, we reiterate Nigeria's support for the enforcement of Council resolutions on arms embargoes and believe that the maximum cooperation of Member States in providing requisite information on violation of those embargoes would strengthen the common resolve to address the problem. It is not insignificant in that regard to point out the role of producers in furnishing accurate data on their trade in those weapons with Member States.

Nigeria also wishes to emphasize the importance of ensuring the effective collection of weapons, their storage and destruction in post-conflict situations in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The inclusion of DDR programmes in the peacekeeping mandate for States emerging form conflict situations will serve the early integration of the affected States. We are confident that those programmes will continue to form part of future mandates of peacekeeping operations in order to avoid relapses into conflict.

The adoption of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons is indicative of what can be achieved when political will is backed by action. For the Nigerian Government, that could only be a stopgap measure. We reiterate that only a legally binding international instrument on the transfer of small arms and light weapons would satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of victim States and peoples. We appreciate General Assembly resolution 60/81 of 8 December 2005 establishing a group of governmental experts to enhance international cooperation on brokering.

We are pleased to note that the group of governmental experts set up pursuant to resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms", has commenced its deliberations, and we await its findings.

Nigeria's efforts in those matters are reflected in its firm commitment to regional cooperation, as well as to the implementation, jointly with other countries in the subregion of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms. Together with States members of the Community, we have converted the moratorium into a legally binding instrument. We trust that the support of the international community for those efforts will remain strong. That, in the end, would constitute for our countries an endorsement of the path that our leaders have chosen to tread, as well as a contribution to peace, security, stability and development in our region.

Let me conclude my remarks by emphasizing the need to strengthen international cooperation, assistance and capacity-building. We hope that we can count on our international development partners in that regard.

Finally, we want to thank the Security Council and South Africa for convening this meeting.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Ms. Alzhanova (Kazakhstan): Let me start by expressing our gratitude to you, Sir, for convening this

important debate on the problem of small arms. I would also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report in document A/2008/258, which contains, in particular, recommendations for this Council that in our view can play a significant role in tackling the destabilizing accumulation and illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

My delegation fully shares the concern that, as stated in the report under consideration, illicit small arms have a negative impact on security, human rights and social and economic development, in particular in areas of crisis and in post-conflict situations. The accumulation, illicit manufacture, trade and circulation of small arms nurture inter-State conflicts as well as civil wars, terrorism, organized crime and gang warfare, thereby undermining the sustainability of international peace and security.

Kazakhstan recognizes the need to develop legally binding international documents regulating the production, stockpiling, marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and related illicit brokering, as well as achieving effective monitoring and compliance with United Nations arms embargoes.

In that context, we advocate strengthening and further developing such international mechanisms on small arms and light weapons as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons; the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; and the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures. As duly pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, the revitalization of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms can improve coordination on that issue within the United Nations system.

The delegation of Kazakhstan supports the United Kingdom's initiative on universal standards in the sphere of transfers of conventional weapons and is of the view that additional mechanisms of multilateral consultations would help to fill in the gaps in order to reach consensus among Member States.

We express our hope that this open debate will significantly contribute to the productive work of the upcoming Third Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The timely submission of national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action would facilitate effective preparations for and the process of the third Biennial Meeting.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Lisson (Australia): I thank you, Sir, for organizing today's debate. Australia welcomes the opportunity to participate, thanks the Secretary-General and congratulates him on his latest report on small arms. It marks a welcome return of this important issue to consideration by the Council. Recognizing the significant and interlinked arms control, humanitarian, peacebuilding and development aspects inherent in the issue, we urge the Council to continue to make an active contribution towards combating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

We recognize that the Council cannot work on its own in addressing the small arms threat. It is critical that all Member States continue to work actively to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, including the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Australia is also committed to working with regional partners and civil society to address the challenge of illicit small arms proliferation in the Asia-Pacific region. Recognizing, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, that leakage from official stockpiles is a significant source of illicit weapons, Australia has taken practical measures to assist regional States, at their request. Through its Defence Cooperation Programme, Australia provides assistance on matters such as the construction and refurbishment of official armouries and magazines, support for training in firearms and armoury maintenance and accountability, and identification and destruction of surplus weapons. Similar work is also undertaken to assist regional police forces.

The challenges presented by unstable and conflict-prone environments highlight the urgent need for the international community to improve the effectiveness of its assistance in restoring access to

justice and security. The intrinsic link between peacebuilding and development and a secure enabling environment is acknowledged and promoted as a key contribution to the effectiveness of development cooperation. However, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report, "key quantitative indicators ... should be developed and used as a base against which to set measurable goals" (*A/2008/258, recommendation 2, p. 15*) in order to facilitate effective project development and evaluation.

In March, Australia funded a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research activity facilitating the matching of needs to resources for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons in the Pacific region. That study will develop a mechanism to help States identify their priorities for small arms assistance and communicate those priorities to potential donors. We encourage Member States to take advantage of the results of the study when they are released later in the year.

The Australian Government places a high priority on preventing the illicit trade in not only small arms, but all conventional weapons. To that end, we are proud to be one of the authors of General Assembly resolution 61/89, "Towards an arms trade treaty". We are encouraged by the spirit of cooperation displayed at the first meeting of the Group of Government Experts in February, and anticipate further progress on examining the scope, feasibility and parametres of an arms trade treaty at subsequent meetings in May and July.

Australia believes that some forms of small arms and light weapons pose such a significant threat in unauthorized hands that they should be subject to specific transfer controls. In 2005, Australia announced an initiative to address the threat posed to civil aviation by man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). Our initiative has sought to encourage practical implementation of existing controls over the manufacture, storage and transfer of MANPADS and related equipment, training, and technology to prevent the illicit transfer of MANPADS to terrorists and other non-State groups. These efforts culminated in General Assembly resolutions that Australia coordinated in 2004, 2005 and 2007. We will continue to work with all interested Member States in a variety of forums to address this particular aspect of illicit small arms proliferation.

Finally, Australia strongly supports initiatives for reflecting this practical approach in our formal discussions on the Programme of Action. We warmly welcome the proposals put forward by the Chair-designate of the next Biennial Meeting of States Parties, Ambassador Čekuolis of Lithuania, for focused, structured, detailed and results-oriented discussions. We also agree that the specific themes identified for the Meeting represent a strategic focus on key areas of the Programme of Action, which will facilitate fruitful and targeted discussion. We look forward to working closely with the Chair, the facilitators and all other Member States to achieve concrete outcomes in July.

The President: I give the floor next to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on this important issue, which begs for the attention of the international community because of its impact not only on peace and security, but also on the well-being of societies in several parts of the world. The Secretary-General's report on small arms, in document S/2008/258, is a stark reminder of the adverse impact of small arms and light weapons. It contains valuable information and several worthy recommendations.

As stated in the report, most of the present-day conflicts are fought primarily with small arms and light weapons. Though the weapons may be small, they cause mass destruction in terms of their effects in many parts of the world. They are the weapons of choice in several intra-State conflicts and are used by terrorists and criminal gangs who gain easy access to those weapons and connected ammunition.

In most situations, unbridled violence unleashed by the use of those weapons affects civilians as well. And it has become evident that one primary cause that engenders and sustains conflicts resulting in violence affecting civilians is the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We recall that in 2001, in recognition of this fact, the Members of the United Nations launched by consensus the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. However, even that Programme failed to recognize the one major cause driving conflicts and spreading terrorism worldwide. That is the reality of

easy availability of, access to and illicit possession of small arms and light weapons by non-State actors.

The involvement of non-State actors, who often thrive on the power of the bullet to settle political scores, ostensibly fighting for political aspirations, is yet to receive adequate attention in most international forums. For instance, the issue of non-State actors was not adequately addressed by the United Nations at the time the Programme of Action was adopted in 2001. Therefore the 2006 Review Conference of the Programme of Action was seen by a very large number of States as an opportunity to strengthen the Programme through further agreements that would expand its scope on important issues, such as action against non-State actors, that were left unresolved in 2001. Regrettably, however, the Review Conference neither made progress in that direction nor was able to agree on adequate global measures for the Programme's full implementation, simply due to the intransigence of a few, defying an emerging global consensus.

The Secretary-General's report once again provides useful information to enable us to address several issues that could help the international community come to terms with the scourge of illicit trafficking and trade in small arms and light weapons. This is the core issue in achieving success in any endeavour to cope with and mitigate the adverse impact of the proliferation of small arms. Illegal possession of small arms and light weapons by non-State actors is an attendant issue that cannot be left out in any meaningful discussion of this issue.

Sri Lanka, like several other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, suffers from violence and terrorism perpetrated by a non-State actor using ill-gotten small arms and light weapons and ammunition. This terrorist group wreaks havoc in some parts of the country, and their campaign of terror has continued unabated despite all efforts by the Government to seek a solution to the conflict by political means of dialogue and democratic accommodation. All such efforts have failed, primarily as a result of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking and trade in small arms and light weapons, which make it easy for this misguided terrorist group to sustain their campaign of violence and keep faith in the bullet rather than the ballot.

In this context, Sri Lanka joins other concerned parties in appealing to the international community to take urgent action by all available means to stem the flow of weapons into the hands of non-State actors like terrorist groups who do not respect internationally accepted civilized norms and conduct. Unbridled violence and abominable terrorist acts can be stopped only if the supply of and access to such weapons can be halted immediately.

Weapons and ammunition should be held only by legal entities and States who are responsible to the international community for their conduct under international law and treaty regimes that govern good conduct and respect for human rights and humanitarian law. It is important, therefore, to ensure that any measure taken by the United Nations and its Member States to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons does not affect the rights of a State to procure and hold arms to ensure the safety of its citizens.

In this regard, while commending the Secretary-General and the Office of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their efforts so far, we urge action by all States, together with the United Nations, to fully implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trafficking and Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. However, we are convinced that to make a difference on the ground in terms of preventing or mitigating conflicts and violence as well as for combating terrorism, much more needs to be done in terms of eradicating illicit trafficking and trade in small arms by non-State actors. Therefore, the time has come for this Council and the United Nations to expand their scope of action towards preventing small arms and ammunition ending up in the wrong hands. If we fail, violence and terrorism will continue to affect several vulnerable regions and societies worldwide. Our choice is simple. Either we act meaningfully now, or continue business as usual to our own peril.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malawi.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and by thanking you for the initiative to hold this debate and giving me the opportunity to address the Council.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on small arms, which highlights adequately the problems associated with small arms and light weapons.

Over recent years Malawi has witnessed an increased and alarming flow of small arms and light weapons into the country from conflict-afflicted areas, particularly in Africa. The use of such weapons, illegally brought into Malawi, has destroyed lives and livelihoods, bred insecurity of person and property and caused fear and horror among the people in various ways. That has in turn imposed enormous costs on the Government, on communities and on individuals, and has had a profoundly negative impact on socio-economic and human development in the country, particularly in the rural areas, where economic activities have been greatly affected by armed crime and violence. Ordinary people in rural communities have lost valuable property and lives to criminals armed with small arms or light weapons. Many have been maimed or injured and are no longer able to freely conduct their economic activities without the threat of armed violence.

Freedom from the threat of violence is a basic human right and a precondition for social, economic and human development, and the dignity and well-being of all people. In that regard, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, our heads of State and Government recognized the linkage between development, peace, security and human rights and its impact on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Accordingly, Malawi calls upon the international community, led by the United Nations, to intensify its efforts in assisting to remove illegal arms from African countries and to prevent armed violence in order to help Africa achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in a peaceful and secure environment. After all, the vast majority of arms used to commit armed violence and armed conflict come from outside Africa. Africa can no longer afford the cost of armed conflict or allow armed conflict to continue to hold back economic growth and the livelihoods of its people.

In her foreword to briefing paper 107, entitled "Africa's missing billions", published by the International Action Network on Small Arms, Oxfam and Saferworld and launched on 11 October 2007, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia summarizes the immeasurable loss of development occasioned by armed violence and conflict in Africa in these words:

> "This is money Africa can ill afford to lose. The sums are appalling: the price that Africa is paying could cover the cost of solving the HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa, or provide education, water and prevention and treatment for TB and malaria. Literally thousands of hospitals, schools, and roads could have been built, positively affecting millions of people. Not only do the people of Africa suffer the physical horrors of violence, armed conflict undermines their efforts to escape poverty."

In that regard, Malawi views the unregulated manufacture and supply of small arms and light weapons as a real threat to peace, security and development. It is for those reasons that Malawi endorsed the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which emerged from a summit hosted by Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme in June 2006.

Furthermore, we also associate ourselves with the efforts of the international community to establish an effective international regime to regulate the manufacture and transfer of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We believe that the unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons leads to a breakdown of the rule of law, democracy and legitimate State structures.

Accordingly, we support ongoing efforts towards the elaboration of an arms trade treaty aimed at ending the illicit manufacture of and trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We believe that this is a significant step towards the standardization of international trade in conventional arms and ensuring that small arms and light weapons do not end up in the wrong hands and are not used for illegal activities. It is therefore our hope that the arms trade treaty will control both the supply of and demand for conventional weapons. In that regard, we call upon African Governments, arms-producing countries and the rest of the international community to vigorously and proactively support international discussions to achieve a robust arms trade treaty to ensure that Africa is protected from armed violence.

In the meantime, we support all the efforts being made in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In conclusion, we commend the Peacebuilding Commission for its integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and its central role in addressing the problem of armed violence and conflict in Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Frommelt (Liechtenstein): We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons and commend you, Sir, for organizing this timely and important open debate. We hope that it constitutes the resumption of the leadership role of the Council on this topic.

The enormous socio-economic costs caused by small arms and small light weapons are one of the big obstacles to the efforts of many countries to reach the Millennium Development Goals, and the topic thus has very wide ramifications. Small arms and light weapons are widely used in inter-State and intra-State conflicts by Government armies, paramilitaries and rebel forces. In situations outside of armed conflicts, they are the weapons of choice of organized crime groups and criminal gangs.

The numbers speak for themselves. Small arms and light weapons kill at least 300,000 people a year in both conflict and non-conflict situations, and are responsible for 60 to 90 per cent of direct conflict deaths. Some 640 million small arms and light weapons, which are frequently exchanged between various conflicts, are already in circulation. Another 8 million new weapons enter the market every year. With all the attention paid to weapons of mass destruction, the weapons with the most lethal impact are small arms.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be regarded as a cluster of related problems stretching from the illicit trade and transfer of weapons to production, ammunition and brokering. We believe that strict domestic brokering legislation is a prerequisite for effective international cooperation in that area and adopted such legislation in 1999. But better control should not be limited to brokering activities; it should also encompass the physical transfer of small arms and light weapons. Such control of arms transfers should be based on international standards, which prohibit in particular the transfer of small arms and light weapons to end users who do not respect international human rights and humanitarian law. We therefore support all efforts geared towards an international framework for authentication, reconciliation and standardization of end-user certificates. The improvement of end-user certificates for man-portable air defence systems could set an important precedent in that regard.

The adoption of an international instrument on marking and tracing was an important step towards achieving a comprehensive regime in the global fight against the spread of small arms and light weapons. The use of the new politically binding International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons should, however, not be limited to Member States. If it were incorporated into the mandates of future peacekeeping missions, it could significantly reduce the number of small arms and light weapons available in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Although the International Tracing Instrument includes provisions for marking new weapons production, Government stocks and imports, it does not cover the marking or tracing of ammunition. That shortfall contradicts the main purpose of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which, as its name suggests, is to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We therefore believe that the question of ammunition must also be addressed over time. Here, the safeguarding of ammunition warehouses and the destruction of surplus stockpiles should be among the priorities of relevant peacekeeping missions and an initial part of any peacebuilding effort.

The link between small arms, violence and lack of development is undeniable. Moreover, the direct and indirect human, social and economic costs of armed violence are tremendous. Halting the spread of small arms and light weapons would therefore make an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In that regard, Liechtenstein supports multilateral initiatives beyond the United Nations framework and commends those States that have adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Given our belief that effective arms embargoes depend upon the removal of arms from circulation within the embargoed State and that the problem of small arms

and light weapons cannot be solved by arms control measures alone, we will further support activities in the field of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The President: I now call on the representative of Jamaica.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The Jamaican delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in this open debate on an agenda item that is of critical importance to the international community. We view this debate as a chance for the international community to renew its focus and commitment with regard to ending the catastrophic consequences caused by small arms and to garnering the political will necessary to create and implement the appropriate measures to curb the illicit trafficking of these weapons. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General to this body contained in document 5/2008/258, dated 17 April 2008.

Jamaica reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and continues to work towards effectively implementing its provisions through our domestic legislation. To further consolidate that position, we have ratified related international conventions, including the United Nations Firearms Protocol.

At the same time, however, Jamaica continues to be concerned at the lack of progress towards curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Indeed, while we acknowledge that a few steps have been taken in the right direction with regard to specific areas of the Programme of Action, my delegation remains strongly of the view that, if we are to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes to the Programme of Action, great emphasis must also be placed on the area of ammunition.

In taking stock of the implementation of the Programme of Action, we are also of the conviction that the global effort should also focus on the need to examine how implementation can be made more relevant, given that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is still prevalent seven years after the Programme of Action was adopted. That will, of course, necessitate consideration of an approach that would encompass the wider work and activities of the United Nations. In that regard, we look forward to the upcoming third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the illicit proliferation of small arms facilitates a wide array of human rights violations, relating to murder; rape and other forms of sexual violence; kidnapping; torture; and the trafficking of persons, including children. We fully agree that, where armed violence becomes the established means for resolving grievances and conflicts, legal and peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms could in fact be eroded, consequently posing severe difficulties for upholding the rule of law and ensuring the dispensation of justice. In such scenarios, the devastating effects of illicit small arms and light weapons are usually felt most by the vulnerable in our societies, including women and children, and ultimately challenge the development priorities of States by causing the diversion of efforts aimed at attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

It is indeed not surprising that the Small Arms Survey informs us that much more is known about the number of nuclear warheads, stocks of chemical weapons and transfers of major conventional weapons than about small arms. The international community has failed to respond to this alarming threat, especially where it affects developing countries and where the real impact of these weapons, in terms of criminal, gang-related and narco-trafficking activities, is felt daily at an astounding level. If we are to reverse that trend, it is important that all Member States cooperate and engage in meaningful action, including the exchange of information among law enforcement authorities, and implement such measures as will lead to a reduction in the illegal trade of the approximately 875 million small arms and light weapons reported to be currently in circulation globally.

Since 2001, our efforts in Jamaica, with the assistance of our partners, to reduce the volume of illegal guns and ammunition on our streets, have met with some success. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance provided to Jamaica at the bilateral and regional levels, which has allowed for the implementation of the Programme of Action in areas such as the provision of training for legal officers, policy-makers and law enforcement and customs officials. We also express our gratitude to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for

its assistance in training programmes for law enforcement officials. We certainly look forward to continued cooperation and support in other areas as we seek to comprehensively implement the Programme of Action.

Jamaica hereby reiterates its call for the international community to work resolutely and steadfastly towards the adoption of a legally binding instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. At the same time, with the constant changes in global patterns of the supply of small arms and light weapons, there is an equal need for the international community to examine and come to terms with the problem of illicit brokering — a situation that presents the greatest risk of the diversion of these weapons to the underground market and consequently into illegal hands. As stated by the Secretary-General in paragraph 14 of his report, "it is of the highest significance that countries enact effective laws and regulations to govern this wide spectrum of present-day arms brokering". My delegation welcomes that very important and timely injunction by the Secretary-General, which emphasizes the need for the international community to proceed to take urgent action in this critical area.

The nexus between small arms and light weapons and ammunition is indissoluble. Accordingly, while paying due attention to illicit small arms, we must also be resolute in our commitment to regulate the illicit proliferation of ammunition. This is of prime concern to Jamaica. A gun without ammunition is merely a mechanical contraption, a device that is practically useless. So all efforts to curb, regulate or stem the flow of illegal small arms and light weapons must be accompanied by similar, multiple efforts to effectively regulate the illegal flow of ammunition.

As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Jamaica is fully aware of the arduous task faced by the Commission in restoring and maintaining stability in post-conflict situations. The issue of small arms and light weapons is relevant to the work of the Commission, as the levels of illegal weapons circulating in the countries concerned are usually higher at the end of a conflict. In that regard, we support the view that the strategic frameworks developed by the Commission could benefit from coordination with existing instruments such as the Programme of Action and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and also with the work done in other forums to curb the proliferation of illicit arms. The Jamaican delegation certainly looks forward to supporting efforts to that end as the Commission continues to develop the tools necessary to assist in facilitating total recovery from conflict and in achieving sustainable development in all countries faced with such situations, in particular those countries currently on its agenda.

Finally, Jamaica is currently reviewing the recommendations offered by the Secretary-General in his report on small arms and will express its views in the upcoming Biennial Meeting and in other pertinent forums.

Before concluding, I think it is incumbent on Jamaica to express its appreciation and commendation to you, Sir, for your able stewardship of the Council during this month. We wish you all the best in the last few hours of your presidency.

The President: Thank you very much. Those hours seem to be growing longer and longer.

I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): First of all, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate, which has enabled non-members of the Security Council to participate.

In most parts of Africa and, indeed, of the world, the AK-47 rifle has become a menace. Lives have been destroyed, livelihoods disrupted and many people herded into camps for refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of use of that weapon. It has been used by gangsters, robbers and rebels.

Even in some developed countries where the bearing of arms is a constitutionally guaranteed right, easy access to small arms has resulted in many deaths. In some communities, such as that of the Karamojongs of north-eastern Uganda, the possession of firearms is seen as a protection measure, mainly against cattle rustlers from other communities. Those weapons have also been used to carry out raids to capture cattle. All the scenarios that I have described are alarming. Something must be done.

First, the root causes of the proliferation of small arms in illegal hands must be addressed. Poverty is sometimes at the centre of the matter, and measures to eradicate poverty must be put in place.

Secondly, the law and order regime must be strengthened, including through the provision of efficient courts and law enforcement agencies, to obviate the need to defend oneself.

Thirdly, incentives have to be put in place to encourage the voluntary surrender of arms. For example, in the Karamoja area of Uganda, such incentives have included the setting up of business enterprises and the provision to communities of ox ploughs and seeds for planting, as well as measures such as the provision of water to herdsmen to enable them to live a settled life. The Government of Uganda has put in place a programme known as the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme, which includes some of the measures that I have outlined. We call on the international community to support this Programme.

What else has Uganda done? We have put in place a national action plan on small arms and light weapons, which was adopted in June 2004. It is a five-year plan focusing on the strategic themes of control, reduction and prevention, setting out a framework for action at the national level. A functional analysis of the Uganda plan on small arms and light weapons was carried out in September 2007 by a consultancy commissioned by the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States with a view to rationalizing the functioning of the national plan and streamlining its organization, structure and staffing. The report setting out the analysis has already been released and outlines the challenges at hand.

The key objective in developing a comprehensive national policy was to address the full spectrum of issues related to small arms and light weapons and to provide a basis for the review of national legislation, regulations and administrative procedures governing small arms and light weapons. A legal drafting committee, comprising legal experts, has since embarked on the drafting of the bill and the policy, which, upon completion, will be presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs for submission to the Cabinet. It is on the basis of that policy that the review of the Firearms Act and other relevant laws will be carried out.

I now turn to the issue of stockpile management, which involves the marking, collection and destruction of illicit, surplus, obsolete and unserviceable small arms and light weapons. It remains an obligation of States parties to the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol within the region to mark their weapons by the end of December 2008. So far, the Uganda Police Force and the Uganda People's Defence Forces have started to mark their weapons under State control, including those for licensed civilians.

During May and June 2006, a major destruction exercise was coordinated under the national plan in which more than 57,000 small arms and light weapons were melted down at Steel Rolling Mills in the town known as Jinja. It was billed as the largest single small arms destruction effort in Africa. A second round of destroying small arms and light weapons was carried out on 25 July 2007, and more than 237 tons of such weapons had been destroyed by November of that year. In all these endeavours, financial and logistical support was provided by the United Nations Development Programme and the United States State Department, with Saferworld extending technical assistance.

Before I conclude, I want to bring a disturbing piece of information to the attention of the Council. It has been reported in some international media that there is credible evidence that some peacekeepers of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have been giving weapons to illegal militias in exchange for gold and ivory. Among those militias is the notorious Uganda rebel group known as Allied Democratic Forces. Obviously, Uganda is concerned. A thorough investigation should be carried out. We also call on MONUC to undertake robust action to disarm all negative forces on the soil of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which pose a threat to peace and stability in neighbouring countries.

The President: I now call on the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the initiative to hold an open debate, as the delegation of South Africa has done on previous occasions. As stated by the delegation of Uruguay during the most recent open Security Council debate on this item (see S/PV.5390), in March 2006, we encourage the holding of such debates, since they are one of the Council's main mechanisms for improving

its interaction with the General Assembly and other organs of the system.

However, we continue to regret the fact that the item related to the Security Council's working methods has, to a certain extent, been postponed and unfairly linked to resolving the more politically complex issue of increasing the number of Council members. That has somehow prevented us from continuing to implement, through various mechanisms, means of improving the Council's working methods in a clear and defined manner.

The delegation of Uruguay notes that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258) updates and summarizes the information related to small arms in all their aspects and once again alerts the entire international community to the harmful effects of illicit small arms on security, human rights and the social and economic development of States. Uruguay fully agrees that studying the phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is not limited to security issues, but includes other, broader subjects related to human rights and development.

As shown in the Secretary-General's report, small arms continue to be the weapons most used in conflicts, particularly in those going on at present, especially those which continue to be considered by the Security Council. Once again, it is noted with concern that the majority of these weapons are in the hands of civilians, in much larger quantities than those available to armies, police and national armed groups. That is why, in the opinion of the Government of Uruguay, one of the main problems that the international community must face is the civilian population's access to such weapons.

The Uruguayan Government has made great efforts to adapt its policies and legislation to international and regional instruments related to the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Currently, Uruguay has a body of laws, standards and administrative procedures that are related to small arms and light weapons in areas such as production, export, import, transit and retransfer. Uruguay is also party to all international instruments in this area that are identified in the Secretary-General's report.

With regard to the most recent steps taken by our country, I can report that, by Law 18.233 of 11 December 2007, Uruguay ratified the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. That instrument, which is a protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — the Palermo Convention — establishes the obligation to draw up standards for marking in order to identify and track firearms.

Therefore, and in conformity with that Protocol, in 2007 the Interior Ministry of Uruguay approved a circular that requires that all fire rms and ammunition imported into the country, as well as small arms and light weapons destined for use by the armed forces, the national police and other authorized official institutions, be marked. According to the INTERPOL database, in Uruguay there is no illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Nor are they currently any national firearms manufacturers in Uruguay.

Nevertheless, the Government of Uruguay has begun campaigns to destroy small arms and light weapons that are not duly registered or that have been confiscated because they have been traced back to illegal activities. Thus, in the period from 1998 to 2008, Uruguay, through its competent bodies and in close cooperation with the United Nations, destroyed more than 35,000 illegal weapons.

The delegation of Uruguay would like to express its support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General, especially those calling for the unconditional application of all Security Council resolutions concerning sanctions, including those that impose arms embargoes, in order to effectively control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in conflict situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lesotho.

Mr. Maema (Lesotho): At the outset, let me say how pleased I am to participate in this open debate on the subject of small arms under your presidency, Sir. We look forward to a successful and fruitful conclusion of the debate under your able leadership. I also wish to thank, through you, Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her informative and detailed presentation of the report of the Secretary-General.

My delegation considers this debate an excellent opportunity for the Security Council to complement the work of the General Assembly aimed at tackling the issue of illegal small arms. We are elated that this debate comes on the eve of the Third Biennial Meeting

of States on the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Meeting will focus on, among other things, illicit brokering, stockpile management and surplus destruction, as well as on the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. In our view, some of the observations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on those pertinent issues, as well as his analysis of the relevant multilateral instruments, provide Member States with some food for thought as they prepare for Third Biennial Meeting.

It is an undisputable fact that excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to international peace and security, human rights and to social development in many countries. It is also a hard fact that in Africa — a continent that continues to be engulfed by internal armed conflicts — these weapons, which are easily accessible, cause untold humanitarian suffering. A close link between illicit transfers and trade in small arms and light weapons, terrorism and organized crime is also well acknowledged.

Yet there are still no accurate figures for the number of small arms and light weapons currently in circulation globally, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. We share the view expressed in the report that Security Council embargoes, if well enforced by States, can have a destabilizing effect on the circulation of illegal small arms and light weapons. We therefore encourage the Council, as one of the relevant actors in the fight against illicit transfers of small arms, to continue to improve the enforcement of the arms embargoes.

Our general view is that the United Nations Member States, at large, still have to garner the necessary political will to be able to effectively tackle illicit trade in small arms in all its aspects. Since the 2001 Programme of Action remains the main reference that regulates the United Nations in that area, we wish to reiterate our firm commitment to its full implementation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that its effective implementation is a challenging task for those countries, like Lesotho, that have the political will but do not have sufficient resources — hence our repeated pleas for technical and financial assistance to those States in need to enable them to implement the provisions of the Programme of Action.

Lesotho remains committed to regional and global efforts aimed at addressing the problems related to illicit trade in small arms. To that end, we are committed to the full implementation of these instruments, to which Lesotho is a party: the 2001 South African Development Community Protocol on Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other related materials; and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. Lesotho also fully subscribes to the 2000 Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, of the Organization of African Unity.

The Government of Lesotho has made significant strides on the ground regarding the reduction of the number of small arms held by official institutions, as well as in the collection and destruction of illegal small arms. In that regard, we express our gratitude to our partners for their assistance.

In conclusion, we commend you, Mr. President, for your able leadership under your presidency, which ends today.

The President: I now call on the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Montoya (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on behalf of my delegation for your work in the presidency of the Security Council during the month of April and to thank you for convening this open debate. We also wish to express our gratitude to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her presentation at the beginning of the meeting, as well as to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the report that has served as the basis for the debate.

Seven years after the United Nations Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons and almost nine years after the Security Council first debated this matter, the diversion of small arms and light weapons to illicit trade continues to be a threat to peace and security. Its devastating effects continue.

According to the 2007 Small Arms Survey, more than 875 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation today. It is estimated that eight million arms of this type enter the market each year. The

consequences in terms of loss of human lives have been worse than those caused by nuclear weapons. Given the existing stockpiles, small arms and light weapons truly are weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, the level of commitment to address their illicit trade has been much less than that devoted to the problem of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Greater decisiveness is required in acting and moving forward towards universal and legally binding instruments that effectively address that phenomenon.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to use all the tools available to the international community, which requires the will and resolve to fully implement existing legislation and international instruments on the matter. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is one such instrument. It offers precise recommendations for progress in the fight against the scourge. We are confident that the Biennial Meeting of States, to be held in July within the framework of the Programme of Action, will lead to substantive progress and concrete results. We will work tirelessly towards that end. The Biennial Meeting is an opportunity to strengthen the Programme of Action and to promote its proper implementation at the global, regional and national levels.

Colombia will have the honour to be a Vice-Chair of the Meeting and will facilitate the segment on cooperation and international assistance. Additionally, Colombia will host the Latin American and Caribbean meeting aimed at outlining a regional position in preparation for the Biennial Meeting. All States must offer their committed support to the process. In that context, identifying international cooperation and assistance measures is of particular importance. Such issues as national capacity-building, the training of police and customs officers, the rapid and timely exchange of information, and support for prevention campaigns must be given priority.

The report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council today contains various relevant recommendations that once again put the issue of small arms and light weapons, as well as the actions that must be carried out to address the problem, into perspective.

My delegation agrees with the emphasis placed on the first recommendation on the need for States to enhance their efforts to collect, maintain and share data on small arms and ammunition. Government transparency in that area is critical in order to fill the gaps in the implementation of current international instruments. In that regard, the issue of ammunition must be addressed as an element inseparable from the problem of small arms and light weapons. Any effort on the latter will be inoperative if the supply of ammunition is not effectively controlled.

The development of quantitative indicators in the area of small arms, referred to in the second recommendation, would also be a step forward in the right direction. Such indicators should be limited exclusively to small arms and light weapons. In particular, the development of an arms-stock baseline could allow for a genuine and reliable assessment of the magnitude of the problem. On the other hand, it is true that the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons can be related to other factors, such as security, violence, crime, trade, human rights and even development, among others, as suggested in the third recommendation of the report. Nevertheless, the existence of such a broad spectrum of factors should not distract us from the concrete actions that must be taken to handle that phenomenon — in other words, the specific measures that must be taken to control the trade in small arms and light weapons.

It would also be useful to understand in greater depth the scope of the recommendation included in the report on the subject of cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. No explanation is given in the recommendation of either the objectives or the areas of that cooperation.

The issue under discussion is of particular relevance to Colombia. My country has suffered more than most from the consequences of the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. However, it would not be appropriate to frame the problem as if some countries have been more victimized than others. That would not be within the constructive spirit of joint action that characterizes our Organization. All States have a responsibility in the face of that illicit trade. Collective commitment and genuine cooperation, including regional and bilateral cooperation, are needed to confront it.

A clear and firm political signal from the Council on the various aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons would be in harmony with the need to provide decisive support for the tasks of the General Assembly and to strengthen the interaction between our two bodies within their respective mandates. It would also be a positive contribution to the main role that falls to States in the fight against such illicit trade, within the framework of shared responsibility. Only with such an approach can more effective cooperation and international assistance mechanisms be developed and more dynamic action developed to rid the world of that scourge.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your outstanding presidency of the Security Council this month. We also thank you for convening this important debate on small arms.

The Secretary-General has submitted a report on small arms that contains important information on the various aspects of the problem throughout the world. The report also identifies the different international instruments that allow us to stem the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that respect, my delegation appeals to all to make a firm commitment fully and optimally to implement the Programme of Action in order to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My delegation believes that we must commit ourselves to that important instrument, which must enjoy international support. Such support will make the third Biennial Meeting, to be held in July, a success.

My country submitted its report on the Programme of Action at the United Nations Conference to Review the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in new York in June and July 2006. We thereby affirmed our support for and cooperation with the international community through Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society in combating the scourge of the uncontrolled proliferation, illicit trade and brokering of small arms and light weapons.

The danger posed by those weapons in the hands of gangsters and terrorists threatens societies at every level. My country, Syria, does not produce such weapons, yet it enjoys the right to maintain them for its own defence and for liberating its occupied land in the Golan, and for all the reasons previously cited. The Secretary-General's report insists on the fact that, while only about 30 countries produce small arms and light weapons, they manufacture approximately 8 million such weapons every year. It is to be noted that the 2006 report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which deals with issues of armament and disarmament, refers to the fact that the four major arms manufacturers of Israel exported weapons worth some $3.5 billion in 2006.

While the credibility of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms and adequate arms control must be ensured, it is unfortunate that Israel has not respected the deadline for a just and comprehensive peace in our region by withdrawing from all occupied territories to the 4 June 1967 lines in conformity with the terms of reference for peace known to the Security Council.

The situation in the Middle East could be the best possible example in this context. The Israeli occupation of Arab territories is directly supported by certain major States that are exporters of conventional weapons. Those very States, indeed, are engaged in joint projects with the Israeli military industry to perfect technologies for the manufacture of Israeli weapons and to open export markets for Israel. That is enough to encourage Israel to reject the hand of peace that the Arab States are extending. It also encourages Israel to continue to occupy Arab territories and to escalate tension and violence in the region.

For decades, Israel has practiced what it calls weapons diplomacy. That was stated explicitly in 1981 by Israel's then economic affairs minister, Yaakov Meridor. He said, "We are going to say to the Americans, 'Do not compete with us in South Africa; do not compete with us in the Caribbean or in any other country where you cannot operate in the open. Let us do it. You sell the ammunition and equipment by proxy. Israel will be your proxy'".

It is absolutely clear that the Israeli representative's statement during this Council meeting was not consistent with Israel's actions. Israel has been illegally trading in arms worldwide. That in fact fuels

international terrorism; it protects drug traffickers and secessionist movements and saps all international efforts in those areas.

The President: I call now on Mr. Daniel Prince, Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, to respond to comments that have been made.

Mr. Prins: The Secretariat is encouraged by today's rich and constructive debate and by the Council's commitment to take further action in the field of small arms. The urgency of the issue was highlighted once again with the just-released news message from the World Food Programme (WFP) stating that in Darfur, in 2008 alone, 60 WFP trucks have been hijacked, with 39 trucks still missing – and, most horrifyingly, with 26 drivers unaccounted for. Small arms always play a central role as enablers of such violence.

For the Secretary-General's recommendations to be followed up, it will be important that all continue to pay close attention to the issue. It is up to Member States whether, for instance, they want to establish an ad hoc working group to examine those recommendations, as was suggested this morning, or to agree on a presidential statement, or to take other action. The debate shows clearly the importance of consistently including the small arms situation in almost any other debate the Council holds.

For its part, the Secretariat will work actively on integrated and coordinated measures stemming the excessive accumulation and universal availability of small arms.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.